DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 359 PS 023 397

TITLE	National Opinion Poll on Child Care.
INSTITUTION	Child Care Action Campaign, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	Mar 95
NOTE	7p.; Fax quality type.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Child Health; *Day Care; Early Childhood Education; *Employed Parents; *Family Work Relationship; *Federal Aid; Federal Legislation; *Financial Support; Grants; *National Surveys; Parent Background; Public Opinion; Safety; Working Class
IDENTIFIERS	Child Safety; *Opinion Polls; Poll (Influence)

ABSTRACT

A press release and accompanying polling data provide a brief summary of the findings and implications of a national opinion survey, concerning federal child care assistance. The national opinion poll, conducted by Republican pollster Vince Breglio between February 26 and March 5, 1995, showed that Americans are deeply divided over congressional efforts to cut federal child care assistance to working parents and indicated that a majority of Americans are opposed to congressional efforts to weaken child care health and safety provisions. The poll found that, consistent with results of recent child care studies, 80 percent of respondents agreed it is difficult to find child care that is affordable and of good quality. Fifteen percent of respondents said that someone in their household currently uses child care. Commenting on the survey results, a member of the Child Care Action Campaign suggests that although the American people understand the connection between child care and work, many members of Congress have not made this connection. The results of the national opinion poll on child care 1995 are included, along with the survey questions. (AP)

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For Release:
2:00 p.m., Monday, March 20, 1995

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National Opinion Poll To be Released March 20 Finds Americans 'Deeply Divided' Over Proposed Cuts In Federal Child Care Assistance, Opposed To Congressional Efforts To Weaken Child Care Health and Safety Provisions

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A national opinion survey conducted by prominent Republican pollster Vince Breglio finds Americans "deeply divided" over congressional efforts to cut federal child care assistance to working parents. The survey uncovered deep divisions between men and women, liberals and conservatives, and low-income working families and higher income voters. The survey further indicates that a majority of Americans are opposed to efforts to weaken or dilute present requirements that federal funds go only to child care settings that meet minimum state health and safety standards.

The child care poll comes as the U.S. House of Representatives is poised to slash federal child care assistance to working families by $379 million next year and a total of $2.4 billion (20 percent) over five years. The legislation eliminates requirements that federal funds be used in child care settings that meet minimum state health and safety standards, and eliminates the requirement that states invest a portion of federal funds to improve the quality of child care for all working families.

The poll, conducted between February 26 and March 5, surveyed 1,000 registered voters nationwide and has an error rate of plus or minus 3 percent. The findings include the following:

- 47 percent of respondents say it would be a "mistake" to cut federal child care assistance by 20 percent as the House of Representatives is about to do; 46 percent believe the cuts can be made; and 8 percent have no opinion on the legislative proposal. Providing further evidence of a gender gap in public opinion, women were significantly more likely to oppose cuts in federal funding than men.

(more)

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- 54 percent of those surveyed oppose any federal efforts to eliminate requirements that states set minimum health and safety standards for child care facilities.

- 67 percent of all Americans believe that "the government (should) help in paying for child care" for mothers on welfare who are required to work; 29 percent disagree while 3 percent have no opinion on this policy option.

- 64 percent of the poll respondents say that providing poor families with child care assistance will keep them off welfare; 31 percent disagree while 5 percent have no opinion.

- 55 percent of Americans surveyed say that "federal government programs that help pay for child care should be extended to the middle class," while 41 percent disagree and 5 percent have no opinion.

"Consistent with the findings of recent child care studies, 80 percent of poll respondents agree that it is very difficult to find child care that is both affordable and of good quality. Good quality child care is critical to a child's development: while good child care helps to prepare children to enter school ready to learn, poor child care may be harmful to such critical areas as children's language and social development. The cuts proposed in the House measure are likely to have a devastating impact on the quality and affordability of child care at a time when families at all economic levels are struggling with these issues," said Barbara Willer, National Association for the Education of Young Children. "Rather than cutting already limited federal child care funds, making the investment needed to ensure that all child care settings promote children's healthy development is in our national interest. A majority of respondents agree, as evidenced by their support for extending federal government programs that help pay for child care for the middle class."

Dr. Breglio was director of polling for the 1984 Reagan/Bush campaign and the 1988 Bush/Quayle ticket. In 1992 he was teamed with Democratic pollster Peter Hart for the *The Wall Street Journal*/NBC News election year polls.

The poll found that 15 percent of poll respondents, or about one in seven Americans, say that they or someone in their household, currently uses child care. According to 71 percent of all those surveyed, finding affordable child care was "somewhat" or a "great deal" more difficult to obtain than just five years ago.

In 1990, in response to the needs of working parents and their children, Congress enacted, with bipartisan support, and President Bush signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program which has provided billions of dollars in federal child care assistance to working parents. The House of Representatives is now proposing to consolidate the CCDBG block grant and six other federal child care programs into one block grant while reducing overall child care spending by one-fifth by the end of the decade.

(more)

"This poll shows that the American people understand the connection between child care and work. They strongly endorse providing federal child care support to working families to keep them from needing welfare, and helping mothers get child care so they can move from welfare to work. Unfortunately, many members of Congress have not made this connection," said Barbara Reisman, Child Care Action Campaign. "The Kennedy-Dodd Bill is a more sensible approach to the needs of families and their children. It proposes to invest in working families -- the vast majority of whom define themselves as middle class -- who have difficulty finding and paying for the child care they need to work and that their children need to enter school ready to learn."

Press Note: A press conference to release the polling data will be held on Monday, March 20 at 2:00 p.m., at the American Association for the Advancement of Science building, 1333 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

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NATIONAL OPINION POLL ON CHILD CARE
1995*

How hard is it to find child care today? From what you have read, heard or personally experienced, is child care harder to find today, about the same, or easier to find today than five years ago?

Harder than 5 years ago	39%
About the same	23
Easier than 5 years ago	21
Don't know	17

And how about the quality of care provided in child care programs? From what you have read, heard or personally experienced is the overall quality of child care better today, about the same or worse today than it was five years ago?

Better than 5 years ago	24%
About the same	39
Worse than 5 years ago	26
Don't know	12

Now, in your opinion is child care more difficult to afford today than five years ago or not? (If "yes, more difficult," ask:) would that be a great deal more difficult or just somewhat more difficult?

Not more difficult to afford	17%
Somewhat more difficult	34
Great deal more difficult	37
Don't know	12

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* Percents of each question do not always equal 100%, due to rounding of figures

Source: Vince Breglio, R/S/M, Inc., February 28 - March 5, 1995, survey of 1,000 registered voters.

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

It is very difficult for parents to find child care which is both affordable and of good quality. (Push) And would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	56%
Somewhat agree	23
Somewhat disagree	9
Strongly disagree	5
Don't know	7

It is the responsibility of the federal government to see that affordable, good quality child care is available to those who need it. (Push) And would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	22%
Somewhat agree	17
Somewhat disagree	21
Strongly disagree	37
Don't know	3

Federal government programs that help pay for child care should be extended to the middle class. (Push) And would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	31%
Somewhat agree	24
Somewhat disagree	15
Strongly disagree	26
Don't know	5

SPLIT SAMPLE (N=500 EACH)

Mothers on welfare who are required to work should have government help in paying for child care. (Push) And would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	30%
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree	11
Strongly disagree	18
Don't know	3

Providing child care assistance to mothers in poor families will help them stay off welfare. (Push) And would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	39%
Somewhat agree	25
Somewhat disagree	12
Strongly disagree	19
Don't know	5

On the subject of child care: presently, the federal government requires each state to set minimum standards of health and safety for child care facilities. A plan is currently being debated in Congress that would eliminate this requirement and leave it up to each state to set their own standards, even if some states might choose not to have any minimum standards of health and safety.

Would you favor or oppose eliminating the current federal requirement on the states to set minimum standards of health and safety for child care facilities? (Push) And would that be strongly (favor/Oppose) or just somewhat (favor/oppose)?

Strongly favor	26%
Somewhat favor	15
Somewhat oppose	15
Strongly oppose	39
Don't know/refused	5

Let me describe the views of two persons regarding the funding of child care:

1. Person A believes federal financial support for child care can be reduced by as much as 20 percent over the next five years without hurting the nation's supply and quality of child care.

2. Person B believes it would be a mistake to reduce federal financial support for child care at this time because it would hurt the supply and quality of the nation's child care.

Which of these two views is closer to your own, person A's who believes federal financial support for child care can be reduced by 20 percent without hurting the supply and quality of child care, or person B's who believes it would be a mistake to reduce financial support because it would hurt the supply and quality of the nation's child care? (Push) And do you feel strongly or not so strongly about your answer?

Strongly closer to person A	25%
Not so strongly closer to A	21
Not so strongly closer to B	18
Strongly closer to person B	29
Don't know	8